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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the continuing education activities in which teachers engaged and to determine where possible: what factors influenced their participation in courses; the kinds of help teachers received from selected continuing education activities; the kinds of help they received from colleagues; and the changes teachers perceived as needed to facilitate their personal and professional growth. Data were collected by means of a questionnaire sent to all public school teachers employed by the Windsor Board of Education in Ontario. Returns were received to 61.9% of the questionnaires distributed. Five independent variables -- sex, age, academic qualifications, length of teaching experience, and grade level taught -- were selected, and all were found to be significant in influencing participation in the activities investigated. (author/mf)

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SOME FACTORS AFFECTING THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OF TEACHERS

by

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SOME FACTORS AFFECTING THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OF TEACHERS

Introduction

Until recently the provision of educational facilities and opportunities for adults has been influenced mainly by two concepts of education: (i) education as remedial - that is with the objective of affording the adult an opportunity to fill gaps and remedy defects in his earlier education; (ii) education as continuing - that is education viewed as a continuation of previous formal education.

A third concept, of increasing importance in educational theory today, is that of life-long learning - a concept which is increasingly going under the French term éducation permanente. A major aspect of this concept is the contention that informal education is as significant to individual growth as are the formal educational activities in which the individual engages. Exponents of this concept point out that the growth of the individual is a unitary process and that personal and professional growth are closely inter-related (Kidd, 1966; Lengrand, 1966).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to secure answers to the following questions respecting the professional and personal growth of teachers and their participation in continuing education activities:

1. In what continuing education activities do teachers engage?
2. To what degree do teachers perceive that participation in these activities contributes to their growth as persons and as professionals?

3. What factors do teachers perceive to be most important in influencing their participation in these activities?
4. What kinds of help do teachers perceive themselves as receiving from their involvement in these activities?

Background to the Study

The case for continuing education on the part of the teacher is a very strong one. On the level of professional education in general, as well as in the more restricted area of teacher education, the literature is rich with respect to the importance to the individual of constant professional and personal growth.

In the view of Kidd (1962, p.18) a profession "is characterized by [the fact that] its members continue to educate themselves and extend their knowledge and competence," and Anderson (1962, p.284) stresses "Continuing education, both professional and general, [as needed] to keep the individual intellectually alive and broadly informed after he discontinues his formal higher education."

Mackenzie (1962) argued the need for both continuing professional education and the further education of professionals as persons, and Nicholas (1966, p.40) in his study of the continuing education needs of certain professional groups found that the proliferation of professional knowledge "[had] resulted in a growing interest in continuing higher education by practicing professionals."

So far as teaching itself is concerned, the need for continual growth is at least as great as it is in any other profession. The teacher in the elementary or secondary division of the public school

system is in contact with children and youth more frequently, more intimately, and more continuously, than other professional persons, and these contacts are usually of longer duration. Furthermore, it is the primary concern of the teacher to stimulate the child and to assist him in achieving his maximum growth.

Because of this close relationship with children and youth, and the constant opportunity it affords for influencing their growth, both the personal and the intellectual characteristics of the teacher are of great importance in the teaching-learning situation (American Council on Education, 1944; Second Canadian Conference on Education, 1962; Schueler, Lesser and Dobbins, 1967).

The need for continuous learning on the part of the teacher is further emphasized by two additional considerations. In the first place, pre-service training is frequently inadequate (Broudy, 1967; Hall-Dennis Report, 1968; Schueler, Lesser and Dobbins, 1967; Huggett and Stinnett, 1956). This point is made most forcibly by Sarason, Davidson and Blatt. After an exhaustive study of teacher preparation in the United States, the authors (1962, p.12) reach the conclusion that:

> [teachers] are acutely aware that their training has not adequately prepared them for the problems they encounter in the classroom.

An important function of in-service or continuing education for teachers is, therefore, "to eliminate deficiencies in [their] background preparation." (Hass, 1957, p.14).

Second, even if no fault could be found with the pre-service training per se, such training would still fail to serve the continuing education needs of the practicing teacher. For social conditions are in a constant state of flux, and knowledge itself increases at an exponential rate.

Moreover, the constantly growing demand for teachers has brought and continues to bring into the classroom untrained graduates, teachers holding temporary licences, and many who are returning after one or two years of absence. Such persons need "refurbishing" and must be given an opportunity to become conversant with modern theory and contemporary practice. For them all, in-service education offers, perhaps, the one sure way to achieve and ensure this updating.

As Doherty (1967, p.261) has so clearly pointed out, the education of teachers while in service must be recognized as being no less important than pre-service education, "for the objectives and methods of instruction may be expected to change constantly in the light of research and development in the years ahead."

The value of in-service education is therefore threefold: it assists in overcoming inadequacies in previous training; it contributes to and facilitates the updating of knowledge and skills; it increases expertise and professional competence, thereby helping both to maintain and to improve the quality of service offered by teachers as members of a profession.

Acceptance of the need for and importance of continuing education for teachers points logically to the necessity of determining the most effective ways of promoting and achieving their growth as persons and as professionals.

One approach to this problem has been to study "desirable" characteristics of teachers with a view to determining the most effective methods of selection and training.[1] Repeated attempts have also been

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[1]For an excellent compendium of research on teacher effectiveness see, B.J.Biddle and W.J.Ellena (eds)., Contemporary Research on Teacher Effectiveness (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston), 1964.

made to develop criteria on the basis of which teacher effectiveness could be predicted with reasonable accuracy. Such research has apparently yielded little dividend, largely because of "the lack of satisfactory criteria measures of teaching success." (Beery, 1965, p.15). Failure in this area is repeatedly noted in the literature (Anderson and Smith, 1955; Barr et al, 1953; Fulkerson, 1954; Ryans, 1953; Smith, 1962). Medley and Mitzel (1963, p.2) after a detailed study of the research in this area assert:

> the vast majority of the research on teacher effectiveness . . . must be discarded as irrelevant because the criteria used have been invalid.

And Guba and Getzels (1955, p.330) state, in this connection, that "relatively little more is known now than was known in 1900."

It therefore seemed profitable to direct attention to the factors which, in the opinion of teachers themselves, foster or hinder their development.

This approach seemed justified in the light of the lack of objective criteria by which to judge in-service programs. Hennessey (1950, p.133) had long ago advocated such an approach: "In the absence of objective means of evaluation of in-service programs, a careful screening of subjective evidence is necessary."

There were, however, sound grounds for this approach. Mathews (1954) found that feedback from participant teachers constituted a more reliable source of relevant information about their professional activities than did information from principals or fellow teachers. More recently Koerner (1963, p.20) indicated that participants in training programs are "in many ways the best source of information about the effectiveness of the programs."

Furthermore, teachers are the practitioners "in the field." It is they who determine whether or not a new "idea" will be accepted and implemented effectively; whether or not new techniques will be accepted and used. It is they who convert theory into practice. No clearer statement of the teacher's crucial role in education is to be found than that made by the Ontario Royal Commission on Education (1950, p.564) which stated: "The teacher is the keystone of the educational arch; in the final analysis, the fulfillment of educational aims rests with him."

Some appropriate emphases for the study were provided by Flanders' (1963, p.7) insistence that:

> the heart of the matter . . . is to determine what kinds of teachers like or dislike what types of in-service training, or what aspects of an in-service training program.

The literature on adult education also indicated that the researcher should pay attention to the needs and motives of adults who participate in continuing education activities (Draper, 1964; Kuhlen, 1963). With respect to the continuing education of the teacher in particular, we find a demand for investigation into the in-service experiences that have proven effective (Wattenberg, 1963), that have influenced teaching and learning (Hughes, 1959), that have proved helpful to teachers (Rosecrance, 1963; Sarason, Davidson and Blatt, 1962).

Another important consideration was the relationship between the teacher as professional and the teacher as person. The importance of this inter-relationship was pointed out by Russell (1963), Kidd (1966), Lengrand (1966). Lengrand, (1966, p.32), for example, drew attention to our tendency to ignore "the close and organic bond which exists between professional growth and general development or, if we prefer, the essential oneness of the educational experiences as growth and

development take place."[2] He thereby underlined the importance of studying not only the factors which contribute to the professional growth of the individual, but of considering as well the relevance and importance of learning which takes place outside situations formally structured for the purpose of fostering and facilitating professional growth and development.

Areas of concentration

Following a review of the literature, the following fifteen continuing education activities were selected for use in the study:

1. Membership in Teacher Associations and participation in the activities of the Association(s).
2. Correspondence Courses.
3. Membership in Non-professional Organizations.
4. Leisure activities (e.g., sports, travel, use of communication media, attendance at concerts, plays, operas, etc.)
5. Self-directed Learning.
6. Reading.
7. Participation in Research.
8. Attendance at Conferences and Conventions.
9. Participation in courses leading to a degree.
10. Part-time teaching of adults.
11. Non-credit activities at Institutions of Higher Learning.
12. Observation-demonstration lessons.
13. Miscellaneous education activities.
14. Department of Education courses.
15. Participation in Workshops.

In the selection of these activities the following definition of the National Education Association of the U.S.A., in its 1956 statement served as a general guide:

> The in-service education of teachers includes all informal as well as formal activities that help the teacher to discharge his responsibilities. (p.14)

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[2] "le lien étroit et organique qui existe entre la formation professionnelle et la formation générale ou si on préfère, l'ensemble des besoins éducatifs de l'individu dans son développement." [Translation mine]

Methods and design of the Study

The sample for the study consisted of the teachers employed in the public school system by the Windsor Board of Education in Ontario, Canada.

Data were collected by means of a questionnaire designed in consultation with faculty and graduate students at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, and practicing teachers in schools in Ontario. The instrument was pre-tested among teachers employed by the York Board of Education, in Ontario.

In the final study questionnaires were sent to each of the 1470 public school teachers employed by the Windsor Board of Education, and the usual follow-up procedures followed. In addition to follow-up letters, 744 telephone calls were made to non-respondents of whom 519 were contacted. By the cut-off date a total of 924 questionnaires had been returned, representing 62.9% of the study population.

In an effort to determine whether the respondents were representative of the total population, comparisons were made between the former and the latter. Background data available in the "Staff Directory" of the Windsor Board, and data collected in the questionnaire, allowed comparison to be made with respect to sex and academic qualifications. A chi-square test showed that there was no significant difference at the .05 level of confidence.

Selection of independent variables

Among variables shown to be important to the adult educator are sex (Kuhlen, 1963; Flaherty, 1968), and educational level (Kuhlen, 1963). Other considerations were also found to be relevant. Thus Getzels and Jackson (1963, p.531) pointed to the frequent assumption, among researchers, that teaching is a "unitary interest" and that teachers, as a group, are

homogeneous. Such an assumption, in their opinion, frequently results in "averaging out differences in interest that might exist." Similarly, Charters (1963, p.595) contended that to treat teachers, male and female, young and old, as undifferentiated groups "/might/ obscure the very differences that need to be revealed."

With respect to this study, the decision was taken to restrict comparisons, generally, to five variables, including sex, age, academic qualifications, and grade level taught. In addition it was hypothesized that length of teaching experience would affect a teacher's attitude toward participation in continuing education activities, and that this would prove a significant variable. For this reason, length of teaching experience was included among the five variables used in the analysis.

Statistical methods used

1. Chi-square analysis. The chi-square test was used to investigate significant differences between groups.

2. Optimal Rating Scale. This scaling method was used to secure an ordering of the fifteen continuing education activities investigated, since it was desired so to order these activities as to distinguish between them most effectively in terms of the contributions they made to the teachers' growth and development. Since the Optimal Rating Scale allows optimal discrimination among objects it is particularly appropriate to opinion studies which attempt to determine, as far as possible, which opinions are more or less favored. (Bock, 1960).

3. Factor analysis. An equally important aspect of the study was its analysis of:

i) reasons why teachers participate or do not participate in courses
ii) the kinds of help teachers perceive themselves as getting from courses
iii) the kinds of help teachers perceive themselves as getting from discussions with colleagues.

Investigation of these data was carried out by factor analytic techniques. In this study a principal components analysis was carried out and a varimax rotation applied.

Limitations of the Study

Questionnaire studies have well-recognized shortcomings which need not be elaborated here. In addition to the defects inherent in the questionnaire method as a research technique, this study had additional limitations:

1. Because the study population was restricted to a single school district, the findings are directly applicable only to the study group itself, and cannot be considered as necessarily representing the views of teachers outside this area. They appear, however, to suggest patterns of behavior and types of concerns warranting further and subsequent investigation.

2. No attempt was made to verify the accuracy of the respondents' statements. It is possible, therefore, that the respondents' behavior may have been different from what was reported, and that the degree of congruence between reported and actual participation may be small.

In this connection, however, it should be noted that verbal reports can nonetheless be accepted as valid research data. Thus Goode and Hatt (1952, p.164) in their "Methods in Social Research" are at pains to state that:

> Making a distinction between professed attitudes and actual behavior is a false issue. Verbal behavior is one kind of actual behavior and expresses certain dimensions of social reality which are as real as any other kind.

Summary of Findings

1. Participation in activities

Analysis of the data showed that participation rates in the

activities investigated varied significantly when comparison was made in terms of the five independent variables: sex, age, academic qualifications, length of teaching experience, and grade level taught. In general, persons reporting higher participation rates were male, over thirty years of age, and held degrees. Greater involvement in these activities appeared also to be generally related to length of teaching experience and to grade level taught.

2. Relative contributions of selected continuing education activities to the professional and personal growth and development of the teacher.

Optimal scaling of the ratings made by respondents with respect to the fifteen selected activities resulted in four scales: two relating to professional development, and two relating to personal development. Tables 1 to 4 show the activities in the positions they assume relative to each other when the appropriate scale values are applied. In general "items" are considered "important" if they are more than 1.5 scale units distant from the zero point, whether above or below it.

Each scale is termed an "Orientation." Inspection of the scales indicates two distinct emphases or trends within each Orientation. These emphases have been termed "Components," and components have been named so as to reflect what appears to be the major emphasis or trend indicated by the activities falling toward the ends of each scale.

The results of this analysis together with the responses of teachers to the open-ended questions lead to the following major conclusions:

a) Membership in Teacher Associations is perceived by teachers as holding great significance for them on two levels. First, such membership plays an integral role in fostering the growth of the

TABLE 1

OPTIMAL RATING SCALE:

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

"Professional Image Orientation"

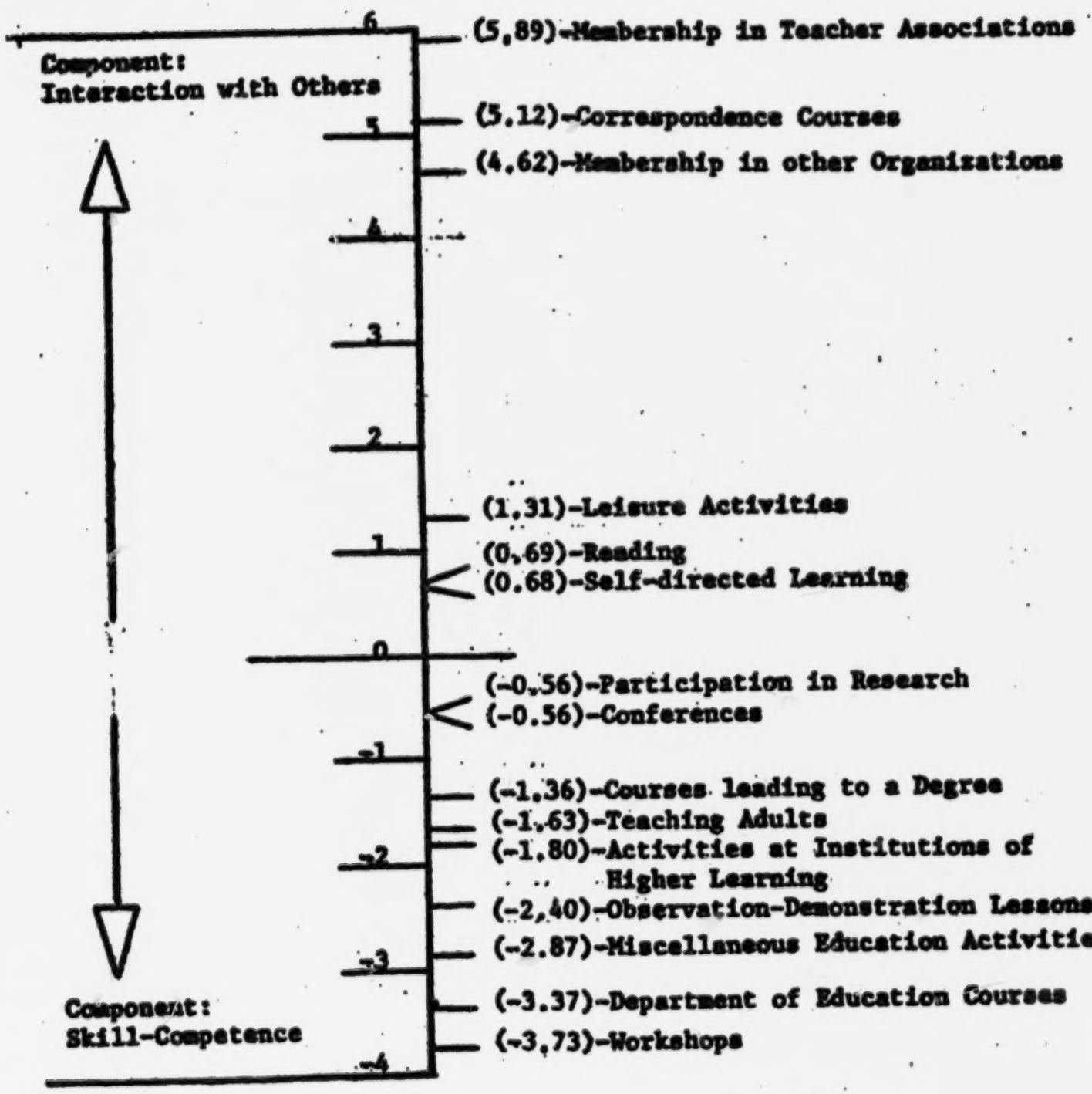


TABLE 2

OPTIMAL RATING SCALE:

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

"Personal Satisfaction Orientation"

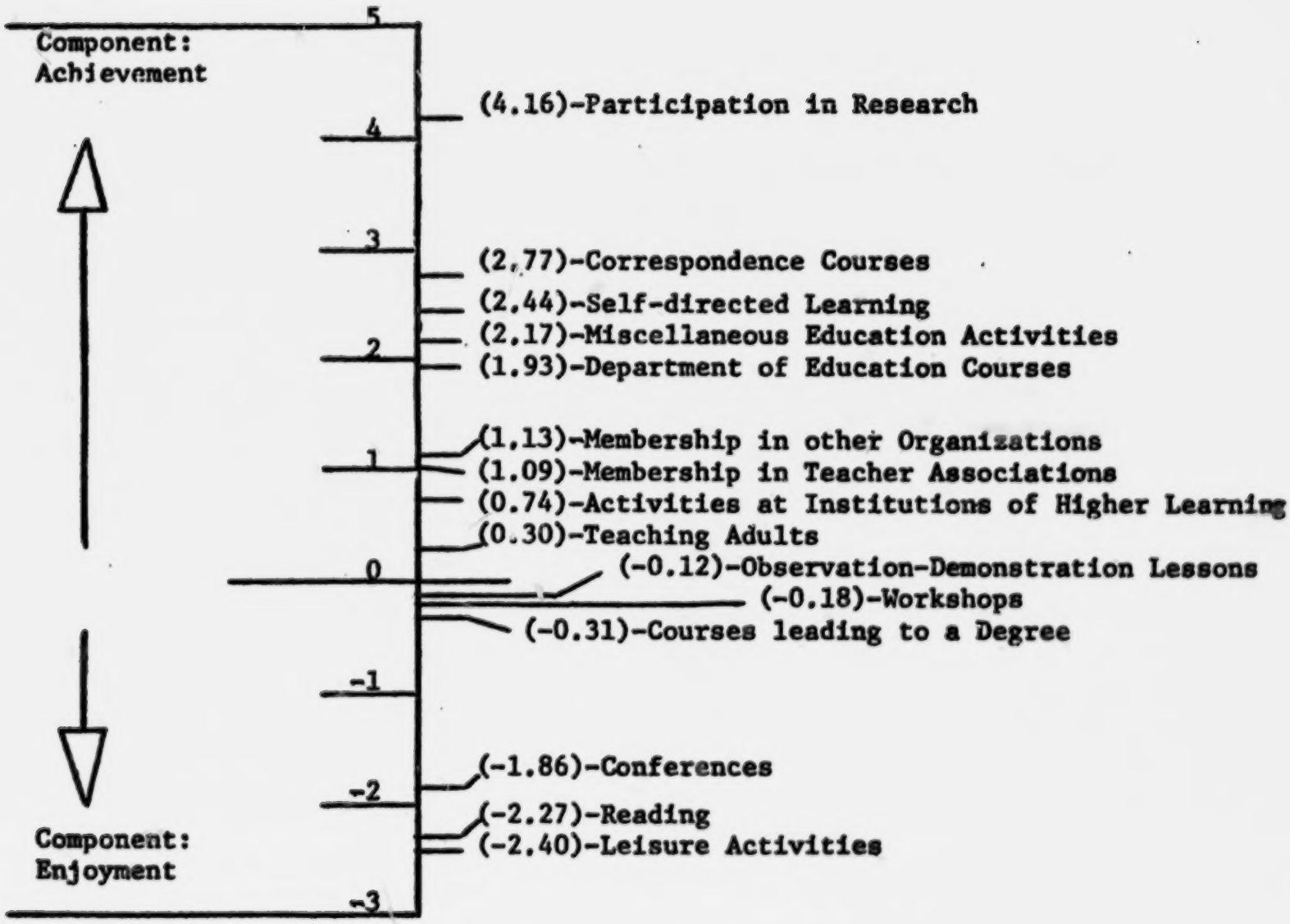


TABLE 3

OPTIMAL RATING SCALE:

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

"Personal Growth Orientation"

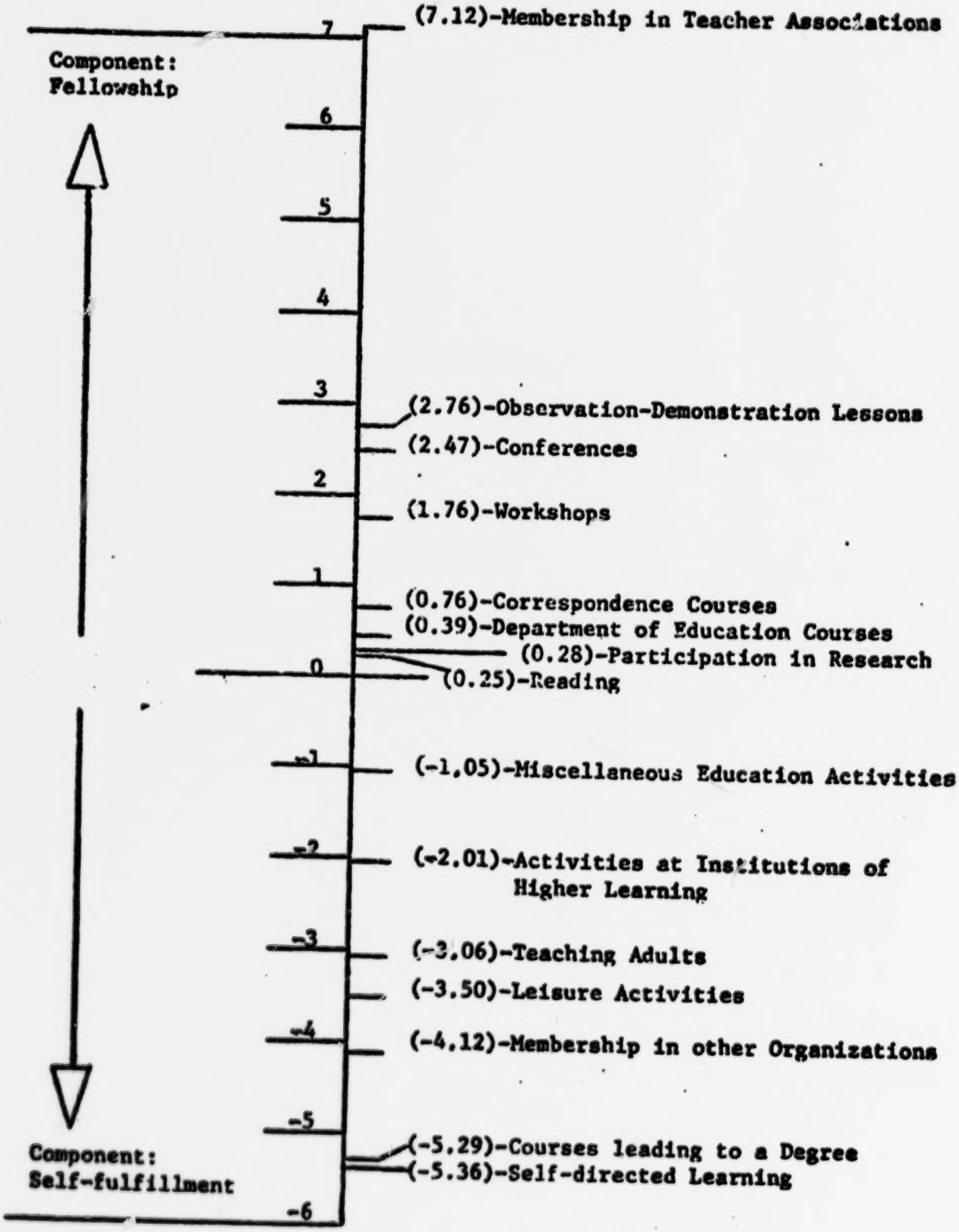
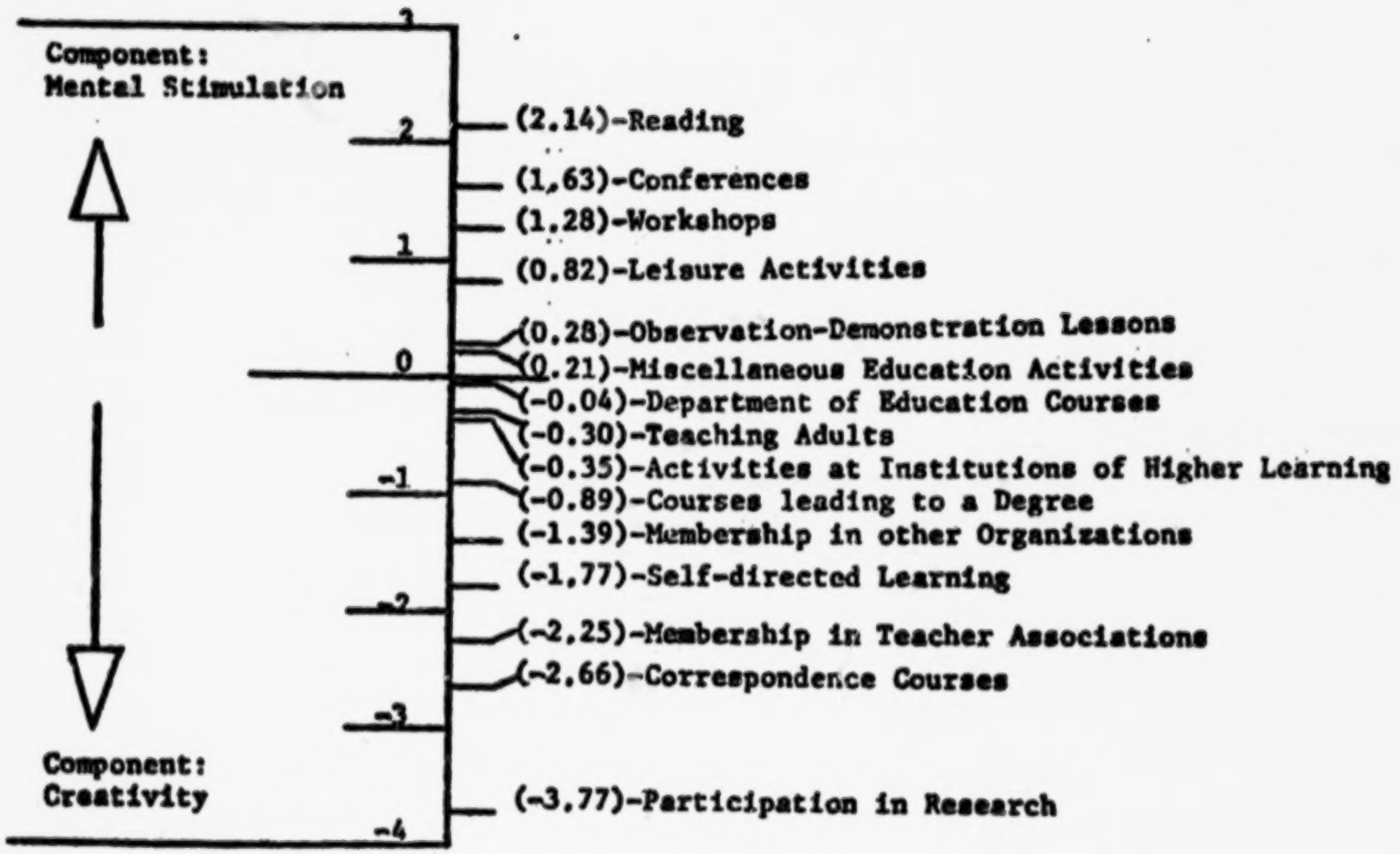


TABLE 4

OPTIMAL RATING SCALE:

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

"General Growth Orientation"



professional image; second, it contributes to the teacher's development as a person by providing him with a milieu in which he can obtain succour and support from fellow professionals. Its place on the scales (Tables 1, 3) suggests that such membership is perceived by teachers as being a more powerful stimulus to their growth and development than any other activity.

b) Membership in Non-professional Organizations appears to be of great significance where interaction with others and self-fulfillment are desired goals.

These findings suggest that it is undesirable to attempt to separate the personal and professional aspects of the teacher's growth and development.

c) Increased skill and competence appear to be most directly assisted by the teacher's participation in Observation-demonstration Lessons, Workshops, Department of Education Courses, Miscellaneous Education Activities and Activities at Institutions of Higher Learning. In addition Workshops and Observation-demonstration Lessons provide an opportunity for personal growth through fellowship with other professionals.

d) Participation in Research satisfies an important creativity need, and is the most personally satisfying activity.

e) Reading is perceived by teachers as the activity contributing most to their "Mental Stimulation."

e) Teaching Adults provides an opportunity for self-fulfillment, and makes a small contribution to the teacher's skill and competence.

f) Leisure Activities contribute to the self-fulfillment of the teacher, their most outstanding contribution being to the teacher's sense of personal satisfaction.

g) Self-directed Learning is the most important of these activities with respect to "Self-Fulfillment."

3. Dimensions of teacher growth and development--kinds of help received from colleagues and factors influencing teacher participation in courses.

One of the purposes of the study was to determine whether a statistical analysis of the data would reveal underlying empirical dimensions of teacher growth and development corresponding to the logical dimensions established in the questionnaire on an a priori basis. As a result of such analysis, three group factors and a general factor emerged. The three group factors coincided generally with the "logical" groupings of the items in the questionnaire. The analysis indicated that interaction with colleagues is an important influence on the teacher, affecting his attitude to the profession and his involvement in professional activities. It also contributes significantly to increasing the teacher's expertise in preparation and presentation of subject matter, and in establishing and maintaining rapport with students. Such interaction is also perceived by teachers as contributing singificantly to their personal growth.

Implications for Theory and Further Research

1. The inseparability of personal and professional growth and of the influences that contribute to these was a recurrent feature of the findings, and is considered one of the most important results of the research. These findings give quite strong support to theoretical and philosophical formulations about the concept éducation permanente, and to the emphasis which this concept places on the essential unity of personal and professional growth.

The implications for future research are that theoretical approaches to the continuing education of teachers should take into

account both these aspects of the teacher's growth. Future research might therefore profitably be directed to a study of the most effective ways in which training programmes can provide for and foster the total growth of the teacher. This may well prove to be a more productive approach than considerations which concentrate solely on improving the professional education of the teacher.

2. It would appear useful for the study to be replicated in other school districts, and the findings compared with those reported in this study.

3. A similar study might well be carried out involving members of other professions in an attempt to determine whether (i) they place equal weight on membership in their professional associations; (ii) their involvement in continuing education activities is as strongly influenced by colleagues as that of teachers appears to be.

With respect to other professions such a study might serve to indicate whether their members appear to perceive a close relationship between personal and professional growth such as this study has revealed about teachers.

4. Replication of the study might also investigate intensively the reading habits of teachers and the specific contributions made by professional and non-professional reading to the growth of the teacher.

5. The importance which teachers appear to attach to work in a professional capacity with adults, and the conclusion tentatively advanced here that such work may contribute to the improvement of the mental health of the teacher and to his all-round development, should be investigated, and some of the implications explored. Particularly is such investigation relevant to the pre-service and in-service training of teachers and to their work patterns.

6. Investigation appears to be needed into ways in which teachers can become more effectively involved in determining the content and orientation of courses and other activities in which they are encouraged to engage, since such involvement appears to be of significant worth to their personal and professional development.

7. The findings of the study supported the contentions of Kuhlen, Flaherty, Charters, Getzels and others that research relating to adults in general and to teachers in particular should differentiate them according to sex, age, educational level, and teaching level. In this study these variables were found to be important as affecting adult participation in continuing education activities.

In addition the study found that participation in such activities was influenced by length of teaching experience. The study therefore provides further empirical evidence that teachers should not be treated as a homogeneous group, but that cognizance should be taken of the possible effects which age, sex, academic qualifications, length of teaching experience, and grade level taught, may have on their involvement in continuing education.

8. The effectiveness of the Optimal Rating Scale, and the insight it allows into empirical data, suggest that it is a useful analytical tool that could be effectively utilized by researchers in adult education.

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